Hardships of workers

1173. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether our workers suffer untold hardships in countries like Malaysia and other South-Eastern countries; and

(b) if so, the action taken to take up the matter with those countries to prevent our workers from harassment?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Complaints received from Indian workers working in Malaysia mainly relate to non compliance of the terms and conditions of employment contract, bad living conditions and their passports being retained by the employers. The number of Indian workers in the other South Eastern countries is negligible and no such report of hardships of Indian workers have been received by the Indian Missions.

(b) The High Commission of India in Malaysia offers all possible assistance to Indian workers in settling their disputes with their employers and in their repatriation to India if required. Complaints received by the Mission are referred to the local Malaysian authorities for redressal. The Ministry has finalized bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on labour with the Government of Malaysia.

Suicide by Indian expatriates

1174. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether suicide among the Indian expatriates in Gulf is on the rise since 2003;

(b) whether these suicide deaths are attributed to mounting debts and resulting depression; and

(c) whether the expatriates mostly from Kerala and Tamil Nadu are trapped by credit card companies and private lenders, while being under extreme family pressure for large remittances?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) There is no definite pattern in the number of suicides of Indian expatriates in various Gulf countries between 2003 and now.

(b) No such reason has been reported.

(c) Government has not come across any such specific case.

Schemes implemented by Ministry

1175. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the schemes implemented by his Ministry;

(b) the salient features of each of the scheme;

(c) whether any allotment is made to the States under these schemes; and

(d) if so, the quantum of allotment made to the State of Goa under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) A statement is enclosed. (*See* below)

(c) and (d) The states are released funds for the Pre-departure Orientation and skill upgradation programme. State Government of Goa was released Rs.1.80 lakhs for pre-departure orientation and skill upgradation programme during the year 2007-08.

Statement

A brief overview of the schemes initiated by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and their salient features:

1. **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)**

   The objective of the scheme is to fulfill the aspirations and expectations of Overseas Indians. This will bring Overseas Indian Community closer to the country and will enable them to participate in the development programmes more effectively.

2. **Know India Programme (Internship Programme for Diaspora Youth)**

   The objective is to bring the young overseas Indians closer and bond with contemporary India. It helps the younger generation of overseas Indians understand India better. It also provides a forum for students and young professionals of Indian origin to share their views, expectations and experience and bond with contemporary India.

3. **Scholarship Scheme for Diaspora Children (SSDC).**

   The objective of the scheme is to improve the relationship between and Overseas Indian Community and help the deserving students. Students selected for such scholarships become brand ambassadors for India and its educational institutions and help in deepening the relationships between India and the Overseas Indian Community.

4. **Awareness Campaign/Media Plan**

   The objective of the scheme is to promote legal migration, create awareness among potential emigrants, spreading awareness among the masses about fraudulent practices of touts/unregistered Recruiting Agents (RAs) and making prospective brides of NRIs aware of the fraudulent marriages.

5. **Pre-departure orientation and skill up gradation for emigrant workers**

   The objective of the scheme is to prepare the Indian workers to take up skilled jobs

in overseas employment market and create better skilled and more competitive emigrants work force.

6. **Legal assistance to women facing problems in NRI marriages**

The objective of the scheme is to help the Indian women deserted by their Overseas Indian Husbands.

7. **E-Governance in emigration**

The objective of the scheme is automation and computerization of Protector of Emigrant (POE) offices. All POE offices have been computerized.

In addition to the above, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs extends a wide variety of services to overseas Indians in social, economic and cultural matters. The Ministry has the following programmes:

1. **India Development Foundation**

The objective is to involve Overseas Indians in the social development of India. The projected outcome is to channelise Overseas Indian Resources into social sectors.

2. **Overseas Indian Facilitation Center (OIFC)**

The objective is to promote investment in India by Overseas Indians. The projected outcomes are Promotion and facilitation of a two way flow of Overseas Indian Investment into India as well as business-to-business partnerships of Indian business houses with Overseas Indians.

3. **Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC)**

The objective is to create awareness among potential emigrants and disseminate information. The projected outcomes are Information dissemination on matters relating to emigration, monitoring complaints received from emigrants workers, grievance redressal and follow up with various stakeholders.

4. **Overseas Indian Centers**

The aim is to start three centers in Dubai, Washington and Kuala Lumpur with the objective to extend a host of counseling services to Overseas Indian Workers. The centers will provide legal, medical, financial and counseling services to the Indian workers.

5. **Setting up Council for Promotion of Overseas Employment (CPOE)**

The objective is forecasting of future opportunities for overseas employment, projection and plans for overseas deployment of workers, disseminating information and upgrading skills of intending emigrants. The likely outcomes of this programme is benchmarking, testing and certification of skills, imparting foreign language skills and on-site welfare measures for emigrants.

6. **Construction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra (PBK)**

The objective is to commemorate the evolution and achievements of the India Diaspora. PBK would become the hub of various activities aimed at harnessing the talent pool among the Indian Diaspora and developing a sense of pride in the achievements of India and the Diaspora. This will also provide better work environment to the staff and better facilities to the general public.

7. **Celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD)**

The objective is to organize the annual PBD for creating a platform for bringing Overseas Indians from various countries together to share their experiences, and integrating it with the Country's development process. The projected outcome is to develop a bond and unity of purpose. Six Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas have been organized so far.

Attack on migrant youth

1176. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that life of Indian students in Victoria Australia has increasingly become unsafe with good number of attacks on migrant youth being reported;

(b) if so, whether Government has taken any steps to protect the life of students so that they do not go for suicides and get rid of depression and other health problems;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) if so, the result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Government is aware of the incidents of attacks on Indian students in Victoria.

(b) to (d) The High Commission of India, Canberra and the Consulate General of India, Melbourne have taken up the issue at the federal and State levels. The State Government of Victoria has put in place a number of measures including increased patrol in affected areas, security advice for students and constitution of a Monitoring Committee to address the problem. For the specific protection of students working as taxi drives, measures such as security screen between the driver and the passenger and a system of pre-paid fares during night have been introduced.

Mechanism to protect Indians Overseas

†1177. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an appropriate mechanism for the semi-skilled and poor rural overseas Indian workers to save them from exploitation and protect their interests;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.